successful in the narrow waters in which the enemy submarines had mainly operated were not applicable now that they were able to operate in the open sea at a greater distance from their base.

War Committees ... decision

The system of convoys had only been found successful where it was possible to allot a separate escort to each vessel to be protected. The French had attempted to convoy several ships with one destroyer, with the result that ships had been lost. Men-of-war, which were accustomed to cruise in close order, could to a certain extent be protected by destroyer escorts, but merchant vessels straggled too much, and the system of convoys was not applicable to them. *The President of the Board of Trade pointed out that from an economical point of view the system of convoys was extremely unsatisfactory since it involved the whole convoy proceeding at the speed of the slowest ship and the simultaneous arrival of all the ships at the port of destination, which would then become congested. The system of convoys was not therefore generally accepted by the War Committee."*

Although the President of the Board of Trade said that convoying would be uneconomical owing to loss of time, he did not mention the loss of time occasioned by ships being held up because there was submarine activity off the ports. Nor did he mention the loss of time by the ships having to steam

considerable extra distances to keep out of the submarine danger zone. Incidentally, this made it very difficult to bunker them at Port Said. In effect, his last argument meant that it were better for a ship to be at the bottom of the sea than arrive late, besides which, the more

*** War Committee, sist October, 1916.**